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A

BRIEF ANSWER

TO

A FEW

CURSORY REMARKS

ON

THE PRESENT STATE OF PARTIES.

BY

A NEAR OBSERVER.

Hic niger est: hunc tu Romane caveto.

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S. GOSNELL, Printer,
Little Queen Street, Holborn.

A

BRIEF ANSWER,

&c. &c.

SIR,

I HAVE undertaken the taſk of replying to the "Curſory Remarks on the State of Parties," preſuming, that without any knowledge of ſecret hiſtory, without any ſources of information but thoſe which are open to every one of my countrymen, a very moderate degree of reflection would teach me to detect, and a very ſmall ſhare of ability enable me to expoſe, the injuſtice and malevolence of thoſe attacks you have levelled againſt the moſt illuſtrious characters that ever graced this or any other country. I ſhall follow your own arrangement in my endea-

vours to convince the public, that your aſſertions are always improbable, and ſometimes ſcarcely within the verge of poſſibility, and that the concluſions you draw from them are inapplicable, and contrary to the moſt common and ſimple rules of logic. If I cannot claim an intimate acquaintance with parties, or a confidential knowledge of their ſecret negotiations, I ſhall be the leſs likely to be influenced by the connexions of intereſt, friendſhip, or relationſhip; and as I ſhall for the moſt part admit your own ſtatement of facts, and then ſhew how unwarrantable the deductions are, I ſhall avail myſelf of your information without its concomitants, indiſcriminating partiality and malignant virulence.

You commence your attack with a moſt melancholy diſplay of the calamities and perils of the country when the late Miniſters delivered in their reſignations. That we had many difficulties to ſurmount, and many dangers to encounter, I am not diſpoſed to deny;

but I never will allow that the nation was exhauſted with her exertions, or that the *unhappy ſucceſs of our expeditions had created the higheſt diſtruſt and diſſatisfaction, as to the conduct of the war, and the capacity of the perſons intruſted with it* *. The waves ran high, and the winds blew hard, but never was there a time when the veſſel of ſtate was more ſeaworthy; never a period of greater unanimity, or greater confidence in thoſe who had the direction of the helm. The conſtant whinings for peace of the old Oppoſition had nearly ceaſed, or were totally diſregarded: neither the eloquence of Mr. Fox, nor the facetious rhetoric of Mr. Sheridan, could convince the people of the pacific diſpoſition, humanity, and truly Chriſtian virtues of the ruler of the French nation. Look back on the proud, the haughty aſpect of Great Britain, in the beginning of the year 1801; behold her combating ſingle-

* Vide Curſory Remarks, p. 12.

handed,

handed, not with the gigantic ſtrength of France alone, but with the accumulated and united force of all the maritime power of the weſtern hemiſphere, and retiring from the conteſt, not defeated and diſgraced, but crowned with ſucceſs, and adorned with the brighteſt laurels of victory. Direct your eyes to the internal condition of the United Kingdom; the two great councils of the nation almoſt unanimous in their approbation of the Miniſters and their meaſures; a commerce flouriſhing beyond all example, the monied intereſt placing implicit confidence in the great financier; the people ſubmitting to the unavoidable burdens of war with content and cheerfulneſs; ſcarcely a murmur wafted againſt the throne and government of our auguſt Sovereign, even by the breath of ſedition and anarchy. At this period Mr. Addington came into power; the reſources of the ſtate, if managed with ability, being fully adequate to the great exertions required of it; its ſpirit and ſtrength, if conducted with

energy

energy and vigour, being amply ſufficient to carry us with glory and honour through the arduous and eventful conteſt in which we were engaged.

Well, Sir, this preſent Adminiſtration having entered on their offices, you make the following obſervation: "The public felt all the hazard and difficulty of their ſituation; and the courage and ſelf-devotedneſs with which they had ſucceeded to the poſts of danger, were the topics of admiration and applauſe *." You are either in total ignorance of the ſtate of public opinion at that critical period, or the moſt barefaced miſrepreſenter that ever had the audacity to attempt to impoſe upon a credulous public. The nation heard of Mr. Pitt's reſignation with regret and ſorrow; they regarded it as a great and terrible public calamity; but nothing could exceed their aſtoniſhment, conſternation, and deſpondency, when Mr. Addington was an-

* Vide Curſory Remarks, p. 15.

nounced

nounced as his ſucceſſor. They for ſome time would ſcarcely credit their own ears; but when the doleful news was confirmed, an inexpreſſible torpor and deſpair pervaded the public mind. You, and the party whom you eſpouſe, have always been extremely anxious to inculcate the idea that the preſent Miniſtry was acceptable to the public at its original formation, and always poſſeſſed their extreme good will and approbation. The congeniality of their meaſures with the public feeling and diſpoſition has been the conſtant theme and topic of all their ſupporters. That when the people found Mr. Addington and Lord Hawkeſbury were really to govern the ſtate, they wiſhed them ſucceſs for their own ſakes, I will not deny; but I ever will maintain, that they would much rather the country had never been intruſted to their hands.

I believe you much better able to deſcribe what the Cabinet thought of themſelves, than what the general ſentiments were concerning them. Mingling with all parties, and unconnected

nected with any, I will present you with a slight but impartial sketch of the sentiments and opinions most usually delivered in conversation, at that ever to be lamented period. It was the general subject of inquiry, how Mr. Addington had acquired his political knowledge: it seemed very extraordinary, that his first entré as a statesman should be in the part of Prime Minister: no sooner was the sentence uttered, "Mr. Pitt has resigned, and Mr. Addington has succeeded him," than there was an universal exclamation, "What! the Speaker of the House of Commons? Impossible!"

"He is esteemed a good sort of man, but I never heard of his being a statesman," said one. "He is very popular at Reading: who could have imagined he would be Minister?" observed a second. All agreed in his total unfitness for the situation: all united in expressing their alarm, lest his Majesty's new servants should involve the country in ruin and disgrace. There was much fear, but more wonder.

This was the language generally held. At his courage (if you pleaſe to term it ſo) in accepting ſo important a ſtation, ſurpriſe and aſtoniſhment enough in all conſcience; but I appeal to every unbiaſſed man, if they ever heard a ſingle ſyllable in praiſe of either his talents, exalted patriotiſm, or ſelf-devotedneſs.

The real reaſons of the retirement from office of the late Miniſtry, were certainly not ſufficiently known; and I agree with you in your aſſertion, that a painful obſcurity hung over the motives of their reſignation; but it is alſo an indiſputable truth, that their retreat was never attributed to fearfulneſs or deſpair. The ſtate of public affairs did not warrant the ſuppoſition; it was directly contrary to the character and opinion univerſally entertained of the Miniſters who retired. We have often heard them accuſed of a haughty confidence in their own abilities, of over-rating the ſtrength and reſources of the country, of pertinacious obſtinacy in perſiſting in their endeavours to reduce the power of revolutionary

France;

France; but the charge of timidity and puſillanimous deſpondency never entered the imagination, nor eſcaped the utterance of any human being, except the Near Obſerver. However, as all ranks were ſeized with an indeſcribable conſternation and deſpair at that period, and as ſome cauſe muſt be aſſigned, you think it much more adviſable to throw the burden on the ſhoulders of Lords Grenville and Spencer, Meſſrs. Pitt and Windham, than to develope its real ſource—the univerſal diſtruſt of the abilities and talents of their ſucceſſors. Not ſatisfied with this miſrepreſentation, to the ſentiments which their reſignation excited among the powers of Europe, you have the *candour* to attribute all the difficulties and diſadvantages which attended the negotiation for peace, and ſome of the numberleſs calamities which have reſulted from the treaty of Amiens.

I ſhall quote your own words, Sir, and then ſee if they will ſtand the teſt of examination: "But unfortunately, the ſame motives

were attributed abroad to the conduct of their predeceſſors, whoſe retreat was conſidered, both by the government of France, and the neutral powers of the continent, as a virtual confeſſion of the inability of the country to perſiſt in the war, ſo that they had the misfortune to retire, and the new ſervants of the Crown to ſucceed, under the imputation, that the former poſſeſſed no ability of making peace, and the latter no means of continuing the war*." There muſt be ſome weakneſs in the external conduct of a nation, to convince the ſurrounding powers of its inability to carry on a war; the mere reſignation of any ſet of Miniſters never could eſtabliſh that opinion; there muſt be ſome proof of its exhauſtion, ſome remiſſion of its exertions, ſome great trait by which politicians may judge of its decaying ſtate. Let us ſee if there were any of theſe indications. War, we all know, is principally, if not entirely, ſupported by men and money; and unleſs it can be proved, that

* Vide Curſory Remarks, page 22.

we were in abſolute want of either, or that, though the country was in poſſeſſion of theſe requiſites, Miniſters had not the power to call them forth into exertion; it is not natural to conceive, that the nation was incapable of carrying on the conteſt, or that Miniſters reſigned in deſpair. Now if it ſhould appear that our finances were flouriſhing, and that our army and navy were abundantly ſupplied with ſoldiers and ſailors, and that the whole continent knew and felt the truth of theſe facts; with what principles of reaſoning is it conſiſtent to argue, that it was univerſally conſidered, that the retreat of Mr. Pitt and his party was in conſequence of deſpair; becauſe they could neither conclude peace, nor carry on the war?

The only ſtandard by which other nations eſtimate our power and reſources, is by the extent of our expenditure and the greatneſs of our exertions; particularly if, at the ſame time, the kingdom be free from all internal commotions. That we were not totally exhauſted,

hauſted, I ſhall bring two inſtances, the expedition to Egypt, and the armament ſent againſt Copenhagen. Had the Exchequer been drained, had we been terrified at the thoughts of invaſion, and deſtitute of men for our own defence, is it reaſonable to ſuppoſe we ſhould ſend ſo many troops to ſo diſtant a country as Egypt? Had we felt ourſelves in imminent danger, ſhould we not have compromiſed our diſpute with the northern powers, without daring to proceed to acts of open hoſtility? Could we have made thoſe enormous preparations at ſo incalculable an expenſe, without poſſeſſing very large and copious reſources? Were thoſe ſums, immenſe as they were, raiſed with any difficulty? Did the multitude of taxes occaſion riſings or diſturbances in the country? Were the people diſcontented or diſaffected, or was Ireland in a ſtate of open and dangerous rebellion? Or was it, that the repreſentatives and rulers of the nation were diſtracted and divided in opinion, or that the meaſures for continuing the war were not

carried

carried through the two Houſes of Parliament without great difficulty and violent oppoſition? That the real ſtate of the country was directly the reverſe, every man who calls to recollection the period of which I am writing will bear me teſtimony. The ſtate of public affairs both at home and abroad, the character for firmneſs and reſolution which Mr. Pitt and his aſſociates enjoyed, are moſt cogent reaſons to prove that the people of Great Britain never for a moment entertained the idea, that deſpair of preſerving the country was the reaſon of their unexpected retreat: our unprecedented exertions, both by ſea and land, rendered it impoſſible for the powers of Europe to imagine that the energies of Great Britain were either enfeebled or deſtroyed.

I now proceed to your aſſertion, that Mr. Pitt and Lord Grenville promiſed the new Adminiſtration their conſtant, zealous, and active ſupport, by which you infer that they bound themſelves to approve and ſupport every meaſure which their ſucceſſors ſhould chooſe

to

to adopt, however diſgraceful, injurious, and diſhonourable; that the all-powerful eloquence of Mr. Pitt was pledged to gloſs over acts of conſummate folly; the talents, the weight, and the authority of Lords Grenville, Spencer, Melville, and Mr. Windham, to ſanction their country's diſhonour and infamy. I ſhall lay down two poſitions: firſt, that no ſuch promiſe could ever have been made; ſecondly, that, if it were poſſible, it ought not to be obſerved. Shall it ever be believed that the independent and towering ſpirit of Mr. Pitt could brook to be at the nod and beck of Mr. Addington, to be a mere inſtrument in the hands of ſuch a director, and, like the powers of mechaniſm, to be applied only as ſhould appear to him fitting? I appeal to the country at large, does the conduct of Mr. Pitt, during the ſeventeen years he was Prime Miniſter, give the ſlighteſt reaſon to ſuppoſe he would act ſo mean, ſo ſubſervient a part to any man breathing, however tranſcendent his abilities, however illuſtrious his fame and

character. It was indeed ſaid that Mr. Addington was the puppet of Mr. Pitt; but that Mr. Pitt ſhould be the puppet of Mr. Addington, was never before aſſerted.

The only promiſe which could have been made to the preſent Miniſtry was, that if they acted upon the principles and adopted the line of conduct which their predeceſſors had purſued, ſo long no impediment ſhould be thrown in their way, but every aſſiſtance conſiſtent with duty and honour afforded them. That men of ſuch honourable and independent principles could have pledged themſelves to diſavow their own ſentiments, to cenſure their own actions, to tarniſh their own illuſtrious adminiſtration, in order to buoy up the vacillating power of their feeble ſucceſſors, is utterly incredible.

But now, Sir, I will put the caſe that they had entered into an engagement of that nature, that they had ſolemnly pledged themſelves to throw their protecting ægis over theſe trembling ſtateſmen; in ſhort, that they had pro-

miſed to ſupport every meaſure right or wrong. If they really did make ſuch a promiſe, I do not acquit them of blame; but how much more culpable would they have been, had they perſevered in obſerving it; had they ſacrificed their country to a promiſe, founded neither on ſenſe nor principle, and void by every rule of morality; had they contributed to miſlead and delude the nation by the overpowering weight of their talents and influence! What man of common ſenſe does not know that promiſes contrary to duty and conſcience are not binding? *His promiſſis non ſtandum eſſe quis non videt* *?

To have committed an error once, is a venial fault; but, through a falſe and miſtaken ſenſe of honour, to perſiſt, and continue in contradiction to the dictates of reaſon and in direct violation of principle, to the ruin and deſtruction of their country, would indeed have turned their fair fame to infamy, and

* Cicero de Officiis.

overwhelmed

overwhelmed their degenerate heads with merited ſhame and diſgrace.

On the queſtion of the peace, as contraſted with the negotiation at Liſle, you are very laviſh in your accuſations of inconſiſtency: now, as I eſteem it one of the greateſt defects in a ſtateſman, and in the preſent inſtance a charge moſt unjuſt and unfounded, I ſhall adduce a few reaſons to prove that a member of Adminiſtration ſhould ſometimes give up his opinion to the majority of the cabinet, but that he is by no means obliged to ſacrifice it to a Miniſtry whoſe talents he holds in contempt, and whoſe adminiſtration he conſiders as one continual courſe of diſaſters and calamities. Let us ſuppoſe that Mr. Windham did diſapprove of the projet at Liſle, but that thoſe ſtateſmen with whom he had long been in the habit of acting, and of whoſe judgment and ſagacity he entertained the higheſt opinion, were unanimous in recommending it as a wiſe and ſalutary meaſure at that particular criſis: I ſay that his conduct in con-

ceding his own individual ſentiments to the united voice of his coadjutors in office was not only irreproachable, but in the higheſt degree noble and magnanimous. How could any Adminiſtration ſubſiſt, if upon every the ſlighteſt difference in the cabinet each ſhould with ſtubborn obſtinacy maintain his own opinion?

It is evident to the meaneſt capacity that the affairs of a common mercantile houſe could not be carried on, on ſuch a ſyſtem; much leſs the government of an extenſive nation.

That an Adminiſtration ſhould be compoſed of members, who, on every occaſion, ſhould be unanimous, is extremely improbable, not to ſay impoſſible. It ſuffices that they all unite in maintaining the leading principles on which the general ſyſtem of government is conducted; but in the adoption of particular meaſures the opinion of a few muſt yield to that of the majority; and ſo far from this being a violation of duty, it is incumbent upon them

by

by every rule of rational morality, and ſtrongly enforced by the natural law of government.

But though Mr. Windham, influenced by theſe conſiderations, in compliance with his colleagues in office, might be induced to give his aſſent to the negotiations at Liſle, fully confident that no motive could urge them to betray the honour and intereſt of their country; yet even if the Projet at Liſle, and the Treaty of Amiens, were in every reſpect equal (which I do not admit), all the reaſons, all the motives which procured his aſſent to the former no longer exiſted, but neceſſarily loſt their force, and expired on the diſſolution of the laſt Adminiſtration.

A place in the Cabinet, and a ſeat on the Oppoſition bench, is a perfectly different ſituation: the province of a Miniſtry is to do poſitive good, that of Oppoſition to prevent miſchief: to the exiſtence of the firſt an occaſional conceſſion of opinion is abſolutely eſſential, and demanded by imperious neceſſity; but the latter contains in itſelf no ſuch obligation;

gation; for the more various and unconnected an oppoſition is, ſo much the better chance is there of the country being forewarned of its dangers and difficulties, and every act of mal-adminiſtration being detected and expoſed.

But not to inſiſt further upon the difference of the poſt Mr. Windham then occupied, and his preſent freedom from all engagements, Mr. Addington and Lord Hawkeſbury had no right to demand from him that reſpect and deference which he had before ſhewn to his friends and colleagues. A ſimilarity of principle, general coïncidence of opinion, long experience of their political ſagacity in the moſt critical and difficult emergencies, afforded a rational ground for confidence; but what reaſon had he to confide in Mr. Addington, whoſe every meaſure was in his judgment marked with timidity and weakneſs, and of whoſe principles he could not judge except by his conduct, and that he had univerſally diſapproved?

Your

Your attack is vehemently renewed, becauſe, when the rupture of the Treaty of Amiens was announced, Mr. Windham preſumed to utter one word in approbation of peace, when he had ſo often been a ſupporter of war; proceeding on a notion that he, who once adviſes warlike meaſures, muſt do ſo always and on all occaſions, and that by that ſingle act he is for ever precluded from approving of peace. You make no allowance for the change that time may have wrought in the circumſtances of the nation, nor in the condition of foreign powers.

In ſupport of your charge of inconſiſtency, you bring forward a ſpeech of Mr. Windham's, which directly refutes the whole of the accuſation. Had you ſearched every roll and record of Parliament, every ſpeech and every debate that ever was publiſhed, you could not have made a quotation more immediately tending to overthrow the poſition you intended to eſtabliſh.

" But I think we ſhould weigh well in what ſituation we ſhall be when the war comes upon us, for come it will, and ſooner than I wiſh to ſay. I think it would be the wiſer way to anticipate the blow *." Who does not perceive that this advice was given, that Miniſters might take advantage of the favourable circumſtances of the time †, that they might avoid the miſchiefs which were then impending, and which he foreſaw muſt happen, and not as a remedy and redreſs for injuries after they had been patiently endured, and the opportunity ſuffered to elapſe. Mr. Windham recommended Miniſters to aſſume a becoming firmneſs and ſpirit, and to oppoſe a barrier to the encroachments of France, while the colonies were yet in our hands,

* Vide Debate on the Addreſs, November 23.

† This was the period in which the independence of ſovereign nations was violated by the invaſion of Switzerland, which juſtly excited the greateſt alarm and indignation throughout Europe, and particularly diſpoſed the people of Great Britain to reſentment againſt France. The Cape was ſtill in our poſſeſſion.

while

while our troops were yet in arms; while our ſhips had not only maſts and rigging, but ſailors to navigate them (though that indeed Mr. Addington conſiders of very little importance): ſtrongly did he urge to reſent with vigour and energy thoſe inſults, which, by conſtant repetition, have at laſt irritated and goaded them to ſomething like reſiſtance, while we might have renewed the conteſt with at leaſt one of the advantages procured by a nine years war ſtill in our poſſeſſion, whilſt the teeth and claws of the Britiſh lion were not yet all drawn. Are you ſurpriſed, after having ſeen them tamely ſubmit to every inſult and diſgrace, if, when they ſuddenly aſſumed the garb of war, he ſhould aſk, What is it has changed your ſentiments? What worſe than he has done before can the Corſican tyrant now have done? What ſtrong, what reſiſtleſs motive can compel you to forego all the advantages of your beloved peace, at the very moment when its long

catalogue of immediate calamities * is nearly exhauſted; when every fortreſs is ſurrendered, when all your ſoldiers, ſailors, and ſhipwrights, are diſbanded and diſperſed; when the opportunity of putting in practice the promiſed ſyſtem of economy, and organization of the finances, is juſt arrived; when the nation, relying on your aſſertions of the probable continuance of peace, hoped to reap thoſe advantages for which they had ſubmitted to ſuch accumulated diſgrace and indignity, at the very inſtant they had prepared themſelves to run the race of commercial rivalry, how comes it you found the brazen trumpet of diſcord? Could he refrain from expreſſing his diſguſt when he was told, "We were at war becauſe we could not be at peace?"

* I ſay of immediate calamities; for nothing leſs than the diſſolution of the empire, and the downfall of Britiſh independence, were the gloomy proſpects which dimly gleamed in the diſtant horizon.

Till it is proved that there is no difference between a war commenced at a favourable juncture, and a war forced upon us at a ſeaſon the moſt diſadvantageous, under circumſtances the moſt diſcouraging, when the nations of Europe conſider its principal cauſe to be our refuſal to fulfil the articles relative to the ſurrender of Malta, and that, provided Bonaparte would give us up an iſland, or a colony, he might cut and carve Europe without let or interruption: till this is proved, I think, with every unprejudiced man, Mr. Windham muſt ſtand fully acquitted for the cenſures he paſſed upon the mode and ſeaſon in which we were forced into the preſent war.

Having aſſumed that the conduct of Mr. Windham relative to the rupture of the Treaty of Amiens was inconſiſtent, and having commented upon it with the utmoſt ſeverity you are able, you proceed to moſt violent abuſe, becauſe he and other members of the Houſe of Commons have dared to find fault with

the members of Adminiſtration ſince the rupture; as if it followed of courſe, that even thoſe who approved of the war, and the manner of its commencement, muſt approve of the meaſures adopted in its proſecution. Surely Mr. Addington's beſt friends do not conſider themſelves under ſuch an obligation; much leſs can there be the ſlighteſt tie upon Mr. Windham, and thoſe gentlemen who with him have uniformly reprobated the whole of that diſgraceful, mean, and impolitic conduct, which has at laſt involved us again in war, a war from which all their obſequiouſneſs and all their degrading conceſſions could not any longer preſerve us. What! may he not obſerve the ſhameful procraſtination and delay in putting the country into a proper ſtate of defence; and, obſerving it, muſt he ſit by in ſilence? May he not raiſe his voice to ſave his country while it is yet poſſible? Strong in talents, though weak in numbers, to them alone the nation is indebted for all the beneficial acts of the laſt ſeſſion, for all the uſeful

parts

parts of the army of reſerve and general defence bills *.

Is the flagrant and unpardonable miſmanagement of the volunteers to paſs by unnoticed? One day the ſpirit of the country called forth, the people rouſed to arms by every ſtimulus, and the next their earneſtly-requeſted ſervices refuſed and rejected. Orders upon orders, letters upon letters, ſent to the Lord Lieutenants, till they cannot comprehend one ſingle item of their duty. That my ſtatement is not overcharged, I appeal to the meeting lately held at Edinburgh, and to every Deputy Lieutenant and every acting magiſtrate in this kingdom. I do verily believe, that it is perfectly an enigma whether the operation of the General Defence Bill be ſuſpended or not. Dreadful indeed are the conſequences of this wavering and indeciſive conduct, and moſt tremendous would they be, if Engliſhmen had not too much good ſenſe and real pa-

* This Mr. Cobbett has moſt clearly proved.

triotiſm

triotiſm to avenge the ſins of Miniſters on their country.

Mr. Canning, too, comes in for his full ſhare of that abuſe, which is ſo liberally beſtowed upon all who preſume to eſteem our preſent rulers not abſolutely infallible; but againſt him is preferred a moſt extraordinary ground of complaint. His parliamentary conduct is reviled, not becauſe he ſupported deſtructive principles, or recommended injudicious meaſures; but becauſe he dared to expreſs ſome marks of diſapprobation, where it is preſumed Mr. Pitt entertained a contrary opinion, in violation of that friendſhip and intimacy in which Mr. Pitt and Mr. Canning are moſt ſtrongly united. Will not every true lover of his country exclaim, What private friendſhip can extend its bonds to public conduct? What connexion between individuals, has force to bar the utterance of the indignant ſenator? What obligation can ſuperſede the duty we owe to our country, a duty which

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is paramount to every conſideration, whether of family friendſhip or intereſt?

How deſervedly would Mr. Canning have merited the reprehenſion of all true patriots, if, in the hour of the greateſt danger, he had baſely betrayed the truſt committed to him; if he, one of the few who had the penetration to perceive the danger, and the ability to counſel the means of avoiding it, by a baſe and ignominious ſilence, had deprived the ſtate of that aid and aſſiſtance which ſhe has a right to demand from all her ſubjects; but more particularly from thoſe who compoſe the great councils of the realm! How contemptible would he have appeared in the eyes of Mr. Pitt himſelf, if he had acted ſo mean, ſo abject a part! Shall we for an inſtant ſuppoſe the liberal and magnanimous mind of our late Premier formed a friendſhip, the baſis of which ſhould be unlimited powers of dictating on one ſide, and unconditional ſubmiſſion on the other? Can we conceive that his

his only motive, in extending his foſtering care to the riſing talents and abilities of Mr. Canning, were to procure himſelf a flatterer and a paraſite? With diſguſt and loathing, I turn away from ſentiments ſo abhorrent from private frendſhip, ſo deſtructive to public welfare. Moſt ſincerely do I hope, that Mr. Canning will continue to perform the functions of a Member of Parliament, with the ſame ſound ſenſe, integrity, and eloquence, which has hitherto diſtinguiſhed his public life; regardleſs of the vain and inefficient attacks of envious malice, and ſecure in the approbation of all thoſe whoſe good opinion a wiſe man is anxious to merit and preſerve.

We muſt next come to the negotiation which was carried on by Lord Melville, for the return of Mr. Pitt to power; it being aſſerted, that to effect that point, always has been, and ſtill is, the favourite object of the preſent leader of Adminiſtration*. Mr.

* Vide Curſory Remarks, page 65.

Pitt's

Pitt's refuſal to reſume the reins of government, without the aſſiſtance of his former coadjutors, is ſtigmatized with every opprobrium, and deſcribed as a moſt heinous and unjuſtifiable deſertion of his country; with what truth I ſhall forthwith proceed to examine.

Now, for any blame to attach itſelf to Mr. Pitt, it muſt be firſt clearly demonſtrated, that he had it in his power, conſiſtently with his honour, by his aſſiſtance and councils, to reſcue the ſtate from its preſent embarraſſing ſituation, and, aware of all this, refuſed ſo to do: but if I can prove that his acceptance of Mr. Addington's offers, and abandonment of his former colleagues, would, ſo far from being advantageous to the ſtate, have been highly injurious, I ſhall have completely done away every appearance of cauſe for the accuſation which is now brought againſt him; for no other pretence of blame is aſſigned or

aſſignable, except that Mr. Pitt could have ſerved his country, and would not.

A coalition with Mr. Addington would have placed Mr. Pitt in a very difficult and embarraſſing predicament; he would have been neceſſitated to ſhew outward approbation at leaſt of the paſt acts of that Adminiſtration of which he had become a member (for I think no one can doubt but this muſt have been made a preliminary condition; no man in his ſenſes would enter into a connexion with another, who ſhould be continually expoſing his paſt follies, and upbraiding him with the evils and miſchiefs he had occaſioned). Mr. Pitt could not one day deſcant upon the policy and wiſdom with which the late arduous and important affairs of ſtate had been tranſacted, and the next propoſe meaſures directly militating againſt every principle which he had juſt before defended and praiſed. He could not, in one ſentence, hold forth in commendation

of the wiſdom, moderation, and conciliatory mildneſs of the inſtructions tranſmitted to Lord Whitworth, and then inculcate maxims of dignity and firmneſs.

He could not expatiate upon the truly peaceable ſpirit and good will of the Firſt Conſul, and then diſplay in its native blackneſs his uniform perfidy, his unparalleled cruelty, and ever-active malice againſt this country. He could not palliate the ſubmiſſion to the groſſeſt indignities and inſults, and then call upon us to fight for our honour, to maintain unblemiſhed the glory of Britain. No abilities, no eloquence, could gloſs over ſuch flagrant inconſiſtency of conduct. Except the ſyſtem lately acted upon be radically altered, and new and manly principles of government adopted, he could not hope effectually to ſerve his country; but only for a ſhort time longer to prop and ſtay a tottering Miniſtry.

A ſtateſman could not exhibit a more ſtriking proof of real patriotiſm, than to reject an

offer of power, when he thinks he cannot accept it with honour to himſelf, or exerciſe it with advantage to the ſtate. As far as he was perſonally concerned, had he availed himſelf of Mr. Addington's offer, every thing would have been at his diſpoſal; he would have been as abſolute as he could wiſh or deſire; but he wiſely judged, that even his own unbounded talents, without able coadjutors, could not be eſſentially beneficial, and he nobly ſacrificed every private feeling of ambition, to the dictates of conſcience and honour.

I am well aware theſe arguments tend to prove, that any coalition made by Mr. Pitt with the preſent Miniſtry, would be an event from which much benefit could not be expected, and I am myſelf of that opinion; at the ſame time I am very ready to allow, that the part of Prime Miniſter demands the firſt conſideration, and that it is a very material point whether Mr. Pitt or Mr. Addington holds that office; yet it muſt alſo be admitted, that

for

for the duties of every public department to be executed to the beſt advantage, it is abſolutely neceſſary for all the other places in the Cabinet to be filled with men of character and talents. This, then, is another reaſon for Mr. Pitt's refuſal to take upon himſelf the reſponſibility of office, without all the neceſſary aſſiſtance for diſcharging its duties.

I am not now going to diſcuſs, whether Lord Grenville and Lord Spencer are, or are not, men better qualified to hold official ſituations, than Lord Hobart and Lord Pelham; it ſuffices that Mr. Pitt thought they were. That he did think ſo, admits of no doubt; for it is poſitively ſtated Mr. Pitt would, in conjunction with his former colleagues, have again aſſumed the direction of the Cabinet; but as they were not to be admitted, he declined forming any connexion with the preſent Miniſtry. Mr. Pitt is no more to be blamed for refuſing to act with Mr. Addington and his friends, to the excluſion of

his

his own, than a mechanic would be, for refuſing to repair a houſe with blunt and broken tools, when new and ſharp-edged inſtruments lay at hand, the uſe of which was denied him.

It was my intention carefully to avoid any mention of the preliminary or definitive treaties, as being a field much too extenſive for the narrow compaſs of theſe few obſervations; but as you fall foul of all who were ſilly enough to credit the miniſterial aſſertions, in ſpite of the convincing teſtimony of their own underſtanding, I muſt examine how far they can be defended, who, having firſt deceived the nation, have then the aſſurance to laugh at them for their folly.

You have been pleaſed to hold forth the Treaty of Amiens as a peace of experiment; an epithet, which only made its appearance, when it became perfectly evident that the peace was verging very faſt to its diſſolution. I have not leiſure to examine the different de-

bates

bates on that queſtion, nor the particular ſpeeches delivered from the Treaſury Bench; but of this I am very certain, that in the late Parliament, Miniſters all united in declaring, they did not ſee why this peace ſhould not be as laſting as any that ever was concluded.

It was a very excellent device to call it an experiment, after every proſpect of advantage had diſappeared, and the long train of evils and indignities, ſo often predicted and ſo often denied, had already begun to ſhed their baneful influence. But no longer to dwell upon the meanneſs of the ſubterfuge, I will admit that it was a peace of experiment, and will only aſk, what great doubt was it to clear up? what great hypotheſis was it to eſtabliſh? was it to try whether Bonaparte would make and maintain peace, in the very ſpirit of peace, with this country? or were Miniſters themſelves perſuaded that he would not, but wiſhed to convince the nation of the impoſſibility

of

of peace with the preſent government of France?

Who was there but Mr. Fox, who was not fully ſatisfied on that head, long before the ſurrender of all our numerous conqueſts? Natural love of quiet and tranquillity induced many to approve of the preliminary treaty; and being either abſolutely ignorant of paſt tranſactions, or wilfully blind to the principles and character of the Firſt Conſul, they, with my Lord Caſtlereagh, did not ſee why this peace ſhould not laſt as well as any other.

In December 1801, Bonaparte ſeized the Fame packet. This was neither mild, nor moderate, nor meek, nor friendly, nor conciliating, nor did it indicate any of thoſe pacific and ſocial qualities, for which Miniſters had lately diſcovered the Firſt Conſul was ſo remarkable. Then began the merchants to tremble; then began the ſhip-owners, and the underwriters, and the ſtockholders to look

look around them; they thought it rather an extraordinary method of evincing his pacific diſpoſition, however it was palliated and ſmoothed over. The lovers of peace and defenders of Bonaparte alleged that "Every ſtate has a right to its internal regulations. The law of nations allows and ordains, that each ſhould have the management of its own ports and harbours." And thus they gilded over the firſt bitter pill. This was the firſt peace-offering—a Britiſh ſhip, and a Britiſh ſubject condemned to ſix months impriſonment *.

In due courſe of time the Definitive Treaty was ſigned: Bonaparte took this country, and that diſtrict, and this city, and that iſland, and divided and portioned out Europe as he thought proper. We, under the compoſing

* Vide the Correſpondence, page 185. The captain appealed from this deciſion, to the tribunal of Coutances, which again condemned him, but revokes the diſpoſition of the former tribunal, which had condemned him to ſix months impriſonment.

influence of Mr. Addington's opinions, very quietly acquieſced, quite ſatisfied that the continent did not concern us. However, there were a ſet of the peace-makers, who now began to waver and doubt; they thought themſelves a little haſty in thinking ſo *very well* of the Chief Conſul. I will paſs by the inſolent and overbearing demands of Monſieur Otto, in his note of the 17th of Auguſt, though an unpardonable inſult and affront to the dignity of the Britiſh nation.

Monſieur Talleyrand and the Miniſter of Finance, finding with what a good grace we ſubmitted to the capture of the Fame, naturally had an inclination for ſome more peace-prizes. In the months of July and Auguſt, ſeveral Britiſh ſhips were ſeized, under circumſtances not only utterly inconſiſtent with a deſire of peace and friendſhip, but in direct violation of the law of nations.

Well, well, you will ſay, why all this enumeration? We are all ſatisfied of Bonaparte's

parte's violence and rapacity *now!* And if Miniſters had not been the moſt obſtinate, the moſt wilfully perverſe ſtateſmen, that ever an offending nation was curſed with, we ſhould all have known it long ago. They would not have miſſed that golden opportunity, by which they might in ſome meaſure have redeemed their errors. They would not have had to publiſh a correſpondence of two hundred pages, to make clear to the nation, the juſtice and neceſſity of the war. The queſtion would not have been implicated with Malta and the Order of St. John of Jeruſalem, and Egypt and Sebaſtiani, but would have come directly home to the ſenſes and feelings of the Britiſh nation. An Engliſh ſhip has been unjuſtly ſeized, a remonſtrance is preſented, and redreſs refuſed. Can there be a cauſe of war more juſt in itſelf, leſs liable to miſrepreſentation, either at home or abroad, or more certain of commanding the unanimous approbation of the whole empire? Yet was this

glorious opportunity paſſed by, whilſt the Cape was ſtill in our hands, and all Europe, as well as Great Britain, inflamed with indignation at the unjuſtifiable invaſion of Switzerland, and the open violation of the rights of nations.

The Treaty debaſed and degraded us in the eyes of all Europe; but, what is worſe, it taught us to have a contemptible opinion of ourſelves. Engliſhmen think they gave up that haughty and proud pre-eminence which they formerly ſo much prized. It has tended to blunt our nice and ſcrupulous ſenſe of honour, and to inculcate the idea that that ſacred principle, that pillar of independence and glory, might be ſacrificed to convenience and advantage. What greater degradation could we endure, than to have heard it openly avowed in the Senate, that two articles *, which very principally concerned the honour and intereſt of the country, were never meant to be carried

* The ſecond and eighteenth articles of the Definitive Treaty.

into

into execution, but merely inſerted to give a colouring to our diſgraceful conceſſions? The wiſeſt and moſt able Adminiſtration never could have avoided the innate and neceſſary conſequences of peace; but had any degree of ſpirit and firmneſs been ſhewn, Bonaparte would have ſoon ſeen that he muſt treat us with reſpect, and on the baſis of ſtrict equality, or that war would (as it ought) have been the inevitable and inſtantaneous conſequence of inſult and aggreſſion. All that doubt and anxiety with which the public mind was agitated, to the great injury of commerce and the ruin of many individuals, a firm and dignified conduct would eaſily have prevented. If we fain muſt have concluded a peace of experiment, its ſucceſs might have been much ſooner demonſtrated: the point in queſtion might ſpeedily have been brought to an iſſue, and its reſult rendered plainly perceptible to the commoneſt underſtanding. May we never again, for a few ſhort-lived moments of troubled and diſquiet peace, compromiſe our

dignity

dignity and honour! May it never again be enrolled in the records of Great Britain, that we were glad of a peace of which we could not be proud!

I have been the more particular in my examination of the conduct of Miniſters ſince the ſigning of the Definitive Treaty, and laying open to public view the weakneſs and impolicy of their meaſures, for the ſake of making a very neceſſary diſtinction between thoſe who originally ſupported the peace, and thoſe who approve of the ſyſtem purſued by Government ſubſequently to that event. The great aim, the object never loſt ſight of by Mr. Addington and his friends, is the ſeparation of Mr. Pitt from the Grenville party. This is the ſcope of all their arguments; this is the end to which all their efforts are directed. If they could but effect this, they would reſt ſatisfied. For this purpoſe they ſtudiouſly contraſt Mr. Pitt's approbation of the peace with the cenſures paſſed upon it by the new Oppoſition. The inference they draw is,

that,

that, having once differed on ſo important a queſtion, a coalition is utterly impoſſible, without a manifeſt dereliction of principles and profeſſions on one ſide or the other. No man can be more ready than I am to admit that the peace has been a moſt prolific ſource of calamities; but I am not willing to attribute to it the irreconcilable ſeparation and diviſion of thoſe ſtateſmen, to whom alone, when the preſent Miniſters have ſunk under their own weakneſs and incapacity, the country looks up for protection and ſalvation.

Mr. Pitt did approve the peace; but I cannot recollect his avowing, that "he was decided to prolong peace to the laſt moment of endurance*." I know of no ſentiments of his which warrant this aſſertion. Upon what occaſion, at what time did he ever declare he would ſacrifice the ſmalleſt atom of our honour to procure even laſting reſt and tranquillity? When did he ſay, that if Bonaparte ſeized our ſhips, and we remonſtrated

* Vide Curſory Remarks, page 42.

in vain, the inſult ought to be tamely ſubmitted to? Surely you have given a little looſe to your imagination: your earneſt deſire to create a breach between Mr. Pitt and Lord Grenville has led you to venture an aſſertion which is unſupported by proof and not warranted by fact. I confeſs myſelf ſo dull, that I cannot perceive any reaſon why, becauſe Mr. Pitt gave his vote for the peace, he ſhould pledge himſelf to allow Bonaparte to violate it with impunity; why he was at all obliged to defend Miniſters when they had degraded the national honour by their mean and abject ſubmiſſion. His firſt appearance in the preſent Parliament was on the queſtion of the addreſs to his Majeſty, on the 23d of May. He voted with Government for the addreſs, and ſo did all the members of every party, except the old Oppoſition. Here you ſay he began to ſhew a marked coldneſs and ſtudied perſonal indifference towards the members of Adminiſtration, and particularly Mr. Addington. Nothing could be more manly and

open

open than his conduct. Mr. Pitt never had ſignified the ſlighteſt approbation of all thoſe diplomatic tranſactions, the hiſtory of which is contained in the negotiation papers. He did not attempt to deceive Miniſters, nor to diſguiſe his own ſentiments: the very firſt day he appeared in the Houſe of Commons, he plainly ſhewed them that they had forfeited his eſteem and confidence. Was there any new ſecret promiſe, any new private ſtipulation, to ſecure his conſtant and indiſcriminating ſupport? or was it the intrinſic merit of all their meaſures, the dignity and firmneſs diſplayed throughout the whole negotiation?

All hopes of retaining Mr. Pitt having vaniſhed, infinite pains are taken to arraign the conſiſtency of his conduct, the ſupport he gave to the Treaty of Amiens, and the part he took in the debate of the 23d of June, on Mr. Patten's motion for the cenſure of Miniſters; though it is evident to the meaneſt capacity, if not totally blinded by party prejudice, that the two queſtions are not in the ſmalleſt de-

gree connected, nor bear the ſlighteſt reſemblance to each other. Mr. Pitt was of opinion that great blame attached itſelf to Miniſters, on account of the meaſures adopted, and the line of conduct purſued ſubſequently to the Definitive Treaty; but he did not deem it a proper time to bring forward thoſe charges and accuſations. He did not wiſh to interrupt with long diſquiſitions of paſt tranſactions, the great and important buſineſs which demanded the whole attention of Parliament. He thought the country in ſo imminent a ſtate of danger, that every conſideration ought to be poſtponed to its defence.

The new Oppoſition agreed with Mr. Pitt, that the conduct of Miniſters deſerved cenſure and reprobation, but as to the time they differed. Mr. Windham thought their miſconduct ſo flagrant, that no object could be of greater conſequence than for Parliament to diſavow any ſhare in the humiliating and diſgraceful ſubmiſſions of Adminiſtration. It was hoped that his Majeſty, perceiving that his

his preſent ſervants did not merit the eſteem nor enjoy the confidence of the nation, would be graciouſly pleaſed to remove them from his councils.

Except on the ſingle queſtion of peace, Lord Grenville and Mr. Pitt have ever been unanimous in their principles and ſentiments, and now, the inſtant that peace is at an end, they agree in the juſtice and neceſſity of the war. What diſcordance, what oppoſition of principle is there to prevent their uniting in the cloſeſt bonds for the preſervation of their country? Conſider their long uninterrupted union in politics, and ſay, ſhall a difference of opinion on one ſingle queſtion deprive us of the concurrent aid and aſſiſtance of our ableſt counſellors, of ſtateſmen long accuſtomed to tranſact public affairs in uniſon, well verſed in the real intereſt of the ſtate, and entertaining the ſame opinions of its welfare?

I am the more anxious fully to meet this queſtion; I am particularly deſirous that it ſhould be examined in every point of view, and ſifted

to the very bottom; as I have ſanguine hopes, that, before many months are elapſed, we ſhall ſee them members of the ſame Adminiſtration, actively co-operating in their endeavours to ſave the country, and inflict ſevere vengeance on our inveterate foe. I know that ſome are weak enough to ſay, Beware: this is tender ground; this is a delicate point. I ſtrenuouſly deny it. I defy the ſtricteſt inveſtigation. I know that the friends of the preſent Miniſters are ever active in inſinuating, that, when Mr. Pitt and Lord Grenville ſit in the ſame cabinet, there muſt have been a compromiſe of honour, a ſacrifice of principle. This is ſowing the ſeeds of a future oppoſition: a futile and weak attempt to deſtroy the confidence of the people in thoſe who beſt deſerve it. This is corrupting the ſources of our future hope and ſafety. A more miſchievous poiſon could not be inſtilled into the public mind: a ſubtle, a deadly poiſon, the effects of which are at preſent not plainly perceptible, but which

which tends to deſtroy the very root and foundation of the country's laſt hope and dependance.

On the Treaty of Amiens alone, Mr. Pitt and Lord Grenville differed:

Hac in re ſcilicet unâ
Multum diſſimiles, at cetera pene gemelli.

Were that Treaty ſtill exiſting, there might be a reaſon to ſuppoſe, that their variance of opinion on that head, might be ſome obſtacle to a cordial union; that it might occaſion diſtractions and diviſions in the Cabinet: but the Treaty is gone, is void, is vaniſhed, and with it the only diſagreement in politics that ever ſubſiſted between them. The ſource of variance is dammed up; the foundation of diſſenſion is overthrown; the tree of diſcord is, root and branch, eradicated. On the great axioms of government, on the great principles of politics ever united, concurring in their approbation of war, and in cenſuring the miſconduct

miſconduct of Miniſters, affection for their country, attachment to their Sovereign, will ſoon ſink into oblivion all remembrance of a paſt difference, the cauſe of which is already extinct, and which itſelf is quickly fading from the recollection of all but their ſelf-intereſted opponents.

Great and magnanimous minds are not agitated and diſturbed by the low and envious paſſions, which occupy the thoughts and deſtroy the quiet of thoſe grovelling politicians, whoſe views and whoſe wiſhes extend no farther than themſelves; the utmoſt ſcope of whoſe ambition is to preſerve their places, who conſider a refuſal to concur in their opinions as a perſonal affront and injury.

An enlightened and truly liberal ſtateſman looks with admiration on thoſe who have the courage and fortitude to avow and maintain their principles; he knows and feels the value of bold, upright, and diſintereſted councils; he ſelects his aſſociates in office, not for their ready aſſent and compliance, but for their

abilities, talents, and manly principles; he requires not paraſites, but friends, not inefficient placemen, but able and independent coadjutors.

We are on the verge of a precipice; we are encircled with perils and dangers. Whilſt it is yet in the power of human exertion to ſave us, before the ſun of Britain's glory ſets for ever, let no ſuggeſtion of mortified ambition, no effort of diſappointed malice, prevent us from employing, under the ableſt control and direction, thoſe means which Providence has given us, to protect and ſecure our happineſs and independence.

I will not deſpair; I have ſtill a hope, that, under better auſpices, we may again emerge from the troubled ſea of calamity and diſgrace; when conceſſion and ſubmiſſion are no longer the firſt articles of the miniſterial creed. The ſeaſon may again approach, when Britons ſhall abandon the daſtardly and degrading love of peace, though purchaſed with infamy and diſhonour; when defiance,

the

the ancient characteriſtic of the Britiſh nation, ſhall be inſerted in letters of blood on our triumphant banners.

I have done; I have finiſhed my taſk to the beſt of the ſmall abilities I poſſeſs. Fully confident in the juſtice of my cauſe, I diſtruſt my own capacity to diſplay it in the brightneſs of its native excellence; ſhould a ſhadow of doubt ſtill remain, let it be attributed to my ignorance, to my inability; and let ſome abler diſputant vindicate from foul aſperſion thoſe illuſtrious perſons, whoſe names will be tranſmitted to poſterity with reverence and gratitude, whoſe glory and patriotiſm will ever ſhine conſpicuous in the annals of the Britiſh empire.

THE END.

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